

William Taylor Store  
204 West Bay Street  
Savannah  
Chatham County  
Georgia

HABS No. GA-1196

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM TAYLOR STORE

HABS No. GA-1196

Location: 204 West Bay Street, Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia  
(Wharf Lot Number 3, west of Bull Street)

Present Owner: Southern Marine Supply Company

Present Occupant: Same

Present Use: Ship Chandlery

Significance: Early example of multi-storied river embankment  
storage warehouse, typical of the Savannah water  
front.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1816-1818
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: This site was a strategic commercial spot during Savannah's colonial period. Deeds to the property prior to 1783 can be located in the Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia. From the deeds on record in the Superior Court of Chatham County, it has been established that the property was bought in 1792 by John Taylor, a prominent merchant (Book M, p. 126). In 1798, it was siezed by the sheriff of Chatham County to satisfy John Taylor's debts. At public auction, the land was bought by John Taylor's son, William Taylor, who was also a prominent merchant. In 1809, William Taylor conveyed the property to trustees for the use of his wife and two children (Book 2C, p. 9). Probably in 1816, Taylor built the eastern portion of the present building (this is shown on a map made by John McKinnon, 11 January 1817, Book 2G, p. 299). The western portion was probably added soon after, to judge by the similarity of construction. Subsequent long chain of title not significant.
4. Alterations and additions: Clear internal evidence of major addition toward the south and alteration of roof pitch. Much brick reinforcing and patching, probably after earthquake damage. Old elevator hatch is covered, but framing remains.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Early example of stone construction in warehouse type. A typical embodiment of Savannah's river side warehouses.

2. Condition of the fabric: Structurally sound, but neglected. Parts of wall replaced by patching due to damage of 1881 earthquake.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: East part is rectangular, while the western section is a pseudo-rectangle, wider at the rear than at the front. The front wall is continuous, while the rear wall is broken where the western unit adjoins the eastern unit. Bay Street side is 3 stories, and the River Street side is 4 stories.
2. Foundations: Stone (approximately 28" thick)
3. Wall Construction: Stone (28" thick at basement, 18" at third floor level) with brick patching
4. Chimneys: One interior, 3 end chimneys
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are three entrances on the top floor on the Bay Street side, each connecting to Bay Street level by bridges. Similar entrances on the second and first floors. Main entrances on River Street side at bottom floor. Heavy double doors at all levels, with original doors and hardware in place.
  - b. Windows: Windows are 6/2, double hung sash, and retain original shutter hardware.
6. Roof, cornice, etc.: Gable roof (hipped at east end) with a 45° pitch on one side, slightly less on the other. Roof indication in attic shows limit of original structure, which has been enlarged to the south. Approximately 8" brick parapet.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans
  - a. Basement: Opens toward river. One large room. Floor joists above show framing around original elevator shaft as well as stairway on east side (Note: this is evident on all floors.)
  - b. First and Second Floors: Same as basement.
  - c. Third floor: Similar to basement. Opens on south side to Bay Street level. (Note: all floors except attic open onto different street levels.)
  - d. Attic: Has original wooden wheel (11' diameter) used to operate elevator. Completely enclosed, no windows.
2. Stairways: None extant, but there is a clear indication (framing etc.) of a stairway having existed on the east side of the structure.

3. Flooring: Wood planks, approximately 10" on the average, except in basement, which has a concrete floor.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are stone throughout. Ceilings consist of exposed wood joists and upper story flooring.

Author and date unknown

Edited and revised for HABS by  
Druscilla J. Null 1983

(Note: Since the original writing of this piece, the William Taylor Store has been renovated for adaptive reuse. The top floors of the western section have been converted to residential units, while the top floors of the eastern section now house a restaurant and lounge. Lower floors of both units consist of various stores. ---- Linley, John. The Georgia Catalog, Historic American Buildings Survey. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1982.)